Incorporating Social Media, Digital Learning Tools and CLIL in Language Classroom

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Abstract

Digitalisation and social media are a fundamental part of our environment today in business and education as well as our everyday lives. Incorporating digitalisation into language learning can increase learner motivation, learning and it creates a link between language and other studies as well as links work life competences. On Porvoo Campus of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences the approach to learning is enquiry learning. Nearly all learning modules are integrated into semester projects commissioned by enterprises. Even the language classes are involved in the semester projects.

This paper discusses experiences of the CLIL classroom where social media and digital tools are used to enhance learning and learner involvement. The experiences will be illustrated with practical examples in the programme in tourism and the Swedish classes where e-marketing and –sales in leisure tourism are in focus. Furthermore, the author is a member in an ongoing national project on developing Swedish language teaching in higher education, and she will present some of her project findings.

The social media incorporated in the language class are Facebook, blogs, Trip Advisor and YouTube. Also, e-learning tools and digital games, such as Padlet, Today's Meet and Kahoot, are used to increase learner involvement and empowerment. In addition, the presentation will exemplify how digital portals and applications of various distributors and service produces are used as authentic learning materials in CLIL.

1. Introduction

Studies at Haaga-Helia Universtiy of Applied Sciences prepare students for work life. Porvoo Campus has a practical approach with enquiry learning [1] and learning by doing with a history of cooperation with enterprises. CLIL (content and language integrated learning) and ICT are vital parts of the studies. Semester projects cater for learning in authentic situations and students are faced with real problems. Skills in problem solving, communication and ICT are needed in future work life. Students will change careers and need skills to understand phenomena holistically. This paper discusses CLIL classroom where social media and digital tools are used to enhance learning and learner involvement. The discussion is based on cases of tourism Swedish 2014-2015 including a pilot course in ROKK-project, a national project developing tuition of Swedish in Finnish HE.

Travel industry is making fast advances in digitalization. The process a traveler undergoes when booking a trip is today the same as ten years ago but the environment has changed. The action are completed online. The business world is becoming more digitalized each day and hence universities need to incorporate digitalization in their curricula. Digitalization is changing learning and communication.

Digital competence is one of the eight key competences set by European Commission [2]. It comprises the ability to use digital technology safely in private and work life, and for communication, and skills to search, evaluate, store, produce, present and exchange information in interaction on the Internet.

2 CLIL, Social Media and Digital Tools

2.1 CLIL

Language learning is strongly present at Haaga-Helia. CLIL (content and language integrated learning) makes language learning more meaningful and motivating. According to Gierlinger [2] applications of CLIL should be considered through Coyle's 4C parameters: content, communication, cognition and culture.

Content is spread across the curriculum, and the interrelationship between content and communication, cognition and culture are considered. The 4Cs enable building synergies of integrated

learning. CLIL brings together various approaches of learning: learning as constructing information and understanding though questioning, trial and error and reflection (constructivism); language and communication are needed in the construction of new knowledge; the process of thinking needs to be analyzed for the linguistic demands and learners need to be able to describe and analyze the process; language learning requires context and in CLIL the subject matter provides the required context; interaction is crucial to learning and hence social context is required to discuss and solve problems, analyze and reflect; and finally, culture and language must be considered in the processes above. It is important to create awareness of cultural aspects in communication. Learners progress in knowledge, skill and understanding, and engage in cognitive, linguistic and cultural process in social interaction. CLIL involves using the target language to learn the subject matter and learning to use the target language in the process of learning. It poses a challenge to the learner, provides authentic needs for language use, and often has positive results in enhanced motivation and results.

Wolff [4] claims that CLIL learners are on average be better language learners as they undergo deeper analysis and discussions, better content learners because they construct knowledge in two language and with more complex concepts, and CLIL gives more preparation to work life as it resembles real situations at work and they are better prepared for work life requirements such as team work, problem solving and presentations.

There are many applications of CLIL and not one right way. The approach at Haaga-Helia Porvoo campus is a blend of Coyle's 4Cs, constructivism and enquiry learning. The content and context in the examples to follow is e-sales in tourism. The instructors share lectures, reference reading, research and presentations. The Swedish class shares content, communication, cognition and culture but it is instructed in Swedish only by their language teacher. The semesters starts with mutual planning by a group of instructors and they meet regularly to discuss the group and work in progress.

The author's own experience is that CLIL increases motivation and student activity. The students' success in not only based on language but also competence in the content. The language instructor gains new perspectives to the learners as persons, and both parties become active learners who solve real problems. Communication is most authentic and students integrate skills from the other subjects into their course work.

2.1 Social Media and Digital Tools

Social media has been used to enhance interaction and enliven learning. Teacher and learner roles are changing and the teacher has becomes a facilitator of learning, the students co-authors. The relationship has become more equal. In Finland there might a lack of digital materials for language learning, and thus autonomous choices should be emphasized. Teachers should involve students in planning and goal setting. Digital tools bring variety to the class and learning methods, they caters for various learning styles. Games and competitions challenge and raise the atmosphere and motivation. Use of digital tools in group work can enhance learner engagement, team work skills and as a by-product general communication skills. Language learning becomes regardless of time and place online and digital tools allow also self-assessment, online storage and sharing of materials[5].

Diaz [6] defines game-based learning as borrowing features from games and applying them into learning activities. One learns and practices different skills in games, needs to learn the rules and communicate with other players. Many games show the results and progress, which are instant gratification for learners. Teachers can adjust games for the right level. Also, sensitive topics can be discussed in games behind roles.

Games are a natural part of our lives and should be part of the learning environment. One of the benefits is that playing is self-motivated; the need and will to play has to come from within. Other features and skills games can teach are learning by doing and through mistakes, learning and doing together, sharing, communicating, learning to chat while playing. However, the result reached by playing games may be achieved by reading books but games might be more attractive. Games bring authenticity to language use as a player has a genuine need for the language. Games might initially be challenging and increase teachers' work load but can be rewarding in the end as students get absorbed in the games [7].

2.2 Case Swedish

During the Swedish courses several tourism-specific websites and applications are used for authentic material. Students study vocabulary and phraseology, and familiarize themselves with tools of the trade discussed in the e-sales and marketing and communication classes. There are no language course books. The teacher prepares digital materials comprising of activities, vocabulary and phrase lists and links. Discussion forums on Moodle and Facebook are used to share student created and selected materials. The students have university e-mail and a learning platform also used for data

storage. Facebook has emerged as the best communication tool for student groups as it frequented more often than e-mail. It has led to student initiated conversations and sharing of materials. Students have also written blogs on their project experiences and it has improved the quality of writing. Lessons might be started with brainstorming on a message wall, and electronic surveys are sometimes used to collect feedback or investigate a matter.

Students create material as they co-write, research, select and share material which empowers them and encourages to take charge of their own learning. Involvement of emotions increases the positive effect. Games are introduced by playing a teacher designed games after which students make their own games. Digital tools like games and quizzes are introduced also with the objective of attracting students with outer motivation but with the intention of the attraction resulting in long term learning and changes in study habits.

The following gives practical examples of pages and applications used in the Swedish CLIL classes.
Communcation tools
Moodle, Facebook, blogs (Wordpress, Blogger), email and message walls (Padlet,TodaysMeet)
Travel industry sites
AirBnB, booking,com, hotels.com, SkyScanner, Travelstart, TripAdvisor; Stockholm City Travel Guide, Ving på resan
Language learning and dictionaries
Promentor, Babbel and Duolingo, MOT, Google translate, sanakirja.org, Lexin, Synonymordboken
Other tools
GoAnimate, QR code reader and creator, GoogleDocs

Students search the net and study various pages, then they analyze, compare and report on their findings. They might also participate in online discussions and the data search might sometimes be restricted e.g. to specific services in specific locations. The objectives of the tasks can be to a) learn vocabulary and phrases, 2) to learn about travel supply and services and/or 3) to benchmark supply offerings.

2.3 Semester Projects

This text paragraph discusses three projects briefly: Case Finnair, Splendid Porvoo and Distributions plans for SMEs. The objective is to give an idea a better idea of the scope of the projects.

The commissioner of Case Finnair was the Finnish national airline, and the task was to design new mobile applications for their customers. The project entailed familiarising with the world of travel applications and investigating customer needs. As a final product they designed mobile applications. Demo versions were prepared and presented in at a sales fair for potential customers, teachers and the commissioner.

Splendid Porvoo was commissioned by the university and connected with the co-operation with Porvoo Tourism Office. The task was to investigate ways to prolong tourists' stay in Porvoo. First the present state was analysed and then tourists' needs were surveyed. As a final product mobile applications that allow tourists to download travel information and plan routes were designed and presented.

Distributions plans for SMEs entails designing a website for local enterprises. E-marketing, travel supply and customer needs were studied first, and then a website was designed. The CLIL pilot focused work life competences and creating activities that could be transferred and multiplied to other disciplines.

3 Conclusion

The use of digital tools and materials and the CLIL approach have motivated tourism students. Participation and activity are of higher levels than earlier. Students feel that learning assignments are meaningful. Students have felt that they are not in language class but learning through another language.

The course contents and learning goals are flexible than earlier. Digital tools motivate and involve the students. They enjoy and participate constructing the course. Facebook has proven a successful tool and students share information relevant to the project and the language course.

The experimenting of CLIL and project studies started a decade ago and new implementations manifest each year. More experimenting, testing and longitudinal studies of practices and implications would be needed on the long terms effects. It is, however, obvious that the content, context and mode of study matter.

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